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ABSTRACT

English-as-second-language instructors should take into account the importance of context for the meaning of language and address the varieties of English that learners will encounter in their daily lives. The principal elements of language variation and their implications for learners are described for the benefit of second language teachers. These elements include register, topic, mode of discourse, speaker-listener relationships, and purpose of communicating. The teaching of notions and functions as rule-governed aspects of language, differences within language varieties, linguistic forms limited to particular domains, and regional or social dialects that learners might encounter in the target language are discussed. Classroom activities are suggested that integrate language variation into the English learning experience and provide the opportunity for contextualized practice. The exercises include dialogs and role playing, real language activities, and a technique for focusing on the differences among dialects. (RW)

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LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION:
Theory and Practice
51

Miriam R. Eisenstein

Language Variation and the ESL Curriculum

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Sophia Behrens, Editor

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Introduction

The presupposition behind most English as a second language texts and teaching materials in the past was that English acquisition essentially involved learning stylistically neutral lexical items, grammatical rules, and sound segments that would differ from the analogous components of the learner's native language. This view mirrored the focus of transformational grammar on an idealized speaker-hearer. A description of the linguistic competence of this ideal individual was not meant to account for possible differences in the systems of other speaker-hearers or for social, regional, or contextual linguistic variation. While this approach may have been appropriate for grammarians working on isolated elements of language, the range of linguistic forms and uses needed for communication in the language was not adequately treated.

Recent work in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and second language teaching has greatly expanded our conception of the systematic nature of language. The importance of context for the meaning of language has been underscored by the work of such linguists as Ervin-Tripp (1973) and Halliday (1973). While earlier work was essentially limited to the sentence level, more recent research has considered the systematic relationship of sentences and ideas to each other in discourse (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). The goal of instruction in English as a second language has become the achievement of communicative competence by English learners (Hymes, 1972).

As a result of the change of focus from an idealized speaker-hearer to a person speaking and comprehending in real-world contexts, language teachers must address themselves to the varieties of English that learners will actually encounter in their daily lives. In order to communicate successfully, learners must use English at school, home, or work--while shopping, asking for directions, or talking with strangers and friends. We must account for ". . . the variability of language as being one of its essential characteristics and necessary for it to fulfill its social role" (Criper and Widdowson, 1975).

For many years, ESL practitioners strove to simplify the presentation of language, thinking that the consideration of language in small units would help learners progress. Most practice focused on individual sentences, repeated or manipulated in isolation. The illusion persisted that in-class exposure to basic, stylistically neutral structures was sufficient, and that students could apply these structures on their own outside the classroom. Now, with our new awareness of the many dimensions of language and the importance of discourse in language use, we realize that in our attempts to control language in the classroom, we presented an overly restricted model and did not adequately prepare our students to understand the myriad kinds of language they would encounter. We need to consider that learners will have to use particular linguistic forms for different meanings, and that not all forms are appropriate in all contexts. The problem for curriculum developers and teachers is to find a balance between the earlier approach, which was grammatically controlled but too limited, and the current view of language as a multidimensional communicative system. Our challenge is to analyze language so that it is understandable for the learner, yet provide a realistic picture of how language is really used.

We have also taught English under the assumption that presenting a single dialect is sufficient to enable learners to function in our pluralistic language community. Yet, English learners may encounter a variety of dialects in speakers within their own communities, from other parts of the country, or in the media. Social and ethnic groups native to a particular geographic area often use different varieties of English. In the New York metropolitan area, for example, English learners are likely to hear the regional standard, New York nonstandard English (Labov, 1966), black English (Dillard, 1972), and a Hispanic version of English (Richards, 1979b).

We cannot make assumptions about the forms of English that learners already know or may be in the process of acquiring. Some learners may be assimilating a nonstandard variety of English from their peers. Others may come from a country such as India or the Philippines where non-native varieties of English are used as languages of wider communication (Kachru, 1969; Richards, 1979a).

Furthermore, attitudes toward speakers of different varieties of English may affect both how a communication is received and how a speaker is viewed by others. Different levels of intelligence and trustworthiness have been ascribed to the same individual conveying the same information to the same listeners, but in different language forms (Lambert et al., 1960). And stereotypical language attitudes are not limited to the native

population at large. Teachers of English as a second language (Williams, 1976) and learners of English as a second language (Eisenstein, 1979) have been found to share these views.

In order to help learners cope with language variation, the ESL teacher must have a basic understanding of what variation is and how it can be dealt with in a second language context. The first part of this book is a review of the principal elements of language variation and their implications for learners. Crucial linguistic variables such as topic, mode of discourse, speaker-listener relationships, and purpose for communicating are considered as they relate to the language acquisition process. Where appropriate, related research is mentioned briefly; the recent emphasis on the teaching of notions and functions as rule-governed aspects of language is also discussed. The relevant aspects of variation that are treated not only include differences within a single language variety, but also encompass linguistic forms limited to particular domains and regional or social dialects that learners might encounter in the target language.

The second section contains samples of classroom activities that take into account the variables involved in appropriate language use. This compilation borrows from diverse sources, but it is not by any means intended to be an exhaustive presentation. Rather, it is hoped that these exercises will suggest concrete approaches for integrating language variation into the English learning experience and will encourage ESL teachers to create and implement contextualized practice that is tailored to the interests and needs of the learners.

Finally, an original technique is presented to help learners to focus on differences among dialects and to put them in touch with their own developing attitudes toward various dialects and their speakers. Additional suggestions are given for dialect-related activities and various sources of language samples.

I. ELEMENTS OF LANGUAGE VARIATION

Register

A foreign student was having a difficult time during his first semester in an American university. The demands of his schedule became too great, and he was forced to break an appointment with his chemistry professor, an older gentleman of considerable stature in the field. The student ran over to the professor's office, opened the door without knocking, and shouted, "Hey, can't make it to our meeting. But I'll catch you again soon. Bye."

When the professor had recovered from his shock, he concluded that not only did the student have very bad manners, but he evidently did not take his studies seriously. The student, unaware of the negative impression he had created, departed feeling he had fulfilled his obligation in letting his teacher know that he could not be present for his appointment.

What went wrong? The student's words were correct and well pronounced. There were no errors in syntax, and the student spoke with near-native fluency. But his language was too casual for the context in which it was used; that is, he used the wrong register.

A situationally distinctive use of language may be called a register (Strevens, 1977; White, 1974). Although the literature contains some more narrow definitions of the term, it is in this general sense that the term register is most frequently used: to refer to the kind of language appropriate in a particular situation.

While stressing the importance of register in language learning, we need not lose sight of the basic elements of language that must be taught. Crystal and Davey (1969) recognize that the vast majority of linguistic features are stylistically neutral. This "common core" of features includes most phonological, grammatical, and lexical patterns. For example:

1. (Employee to boss)
   Mr. Baxter knows he should pay his bill.

2. (Parent to parent)
   Johnny knows he should brush his teeth.

However, many linguistic choices are dependent on register. Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens (1972) state that "the choice of items from the wrong registers are among the most frequent mistakes made by non-native speakers of a language."

An insight from second language acquisition research is that learners go through many of the same processes that first language learners do. We are aware that children, as first language learners, do not automatically acquire the ability to use language appropriately. Therefore, it should be no surprise that adult language learners must also learn the appropriate use of a second language. Children's frequent use of overly informal language with people they are not well acquainted with and their free discussion of taboo topics in front of individuals outside of the close family unit are a source of amusement for us all. In children, we accept this as a normal part of maturation and a reflection of the language-learning process. However, listeners are not always tolerant or amused, as they are with children, when non-natives inadvertently choose the wrong register of the target language.

Many analyses have identified the elements in a communicative situation that will contribute to the choice of a particular register. While it is not possible to list them all here, the following categories have generally been found to be applicable.

Mode of discourse

The way language is represented for purposes of communication will affect language choice. A mode may be general, e.g., spoken, written, or read aloud. These general modes may be further broken down into more specific categories such as a friendly chat, a formal speech, a telegram, or a phone call.

A term paper, for example, would not require the same register as a telephone call. Imagine a term paper starting like this:

> Hello. This is Mary writing. I'd like to have Professor Erudite read this paper.

Or think of your reaction to a neighbor's phone call if it began this way:

> The purpose of this communication is to establish the availability of Mary for babysitting this evening.

The differences between oral and written English have been well documented (Sacks and Cayer, 1979; Tannen, 1980; Widdowson, 1978). And not only are there many oral forms, there are numerous written forms as well. Business letter form is quite different from personal correspondence. Borodkin (1975) has found that while second language learners are generally aware that different linguistic contexts require different kinds of language, they are frequently unable to adjust their English from oral to written form.

Topic of discourse

The subject of communication may affect the language used. Language may be personal, political, or technical in nature. Clearly, a very different style of language would be used to relate a personal anecdote than would be used to expound a sophisticated economic theory. But more subtle distinctions can affect language choice.

Imagine that someone enters a gas station and needs to ask the attendant for something. If he wants to buy gasoline, he says, "Fill it up, please." He states his business succinctly using a formulaic expression designed for just one purpose. Compare this with the following request:

> Do you think you might be able to fix my car today? I need it tomorrow morning, and I'd really appreciate it.

The second request, different in content, must be stated in a more formal and elaborate way, even though the setting and speakers are exactly the same.

Particular topics that have been recognized as being associated with distinctive kinds of language range from science and technology (Widdowson, 1979) to language used for finding out information in the library (Mackay and Mountford, 1978). Depending on their individual needs, learners may require instruction including the language associated with particular domains.

Participants in the discourse

The age, sex, and relative status of participants in a conversation must be considered in order to insure appropriate language choice and in order to interpret correctly what is said by others. Learners of English must vary their language depending on their relationships to the individuals with whom they interact. This implies that to use English appropriately, learners must understand the social structure of the society in which they find themselves.

The work of such linguists as Lakoff (1975), and Thorne and Henley (1975) shows that in some cases, men and women use different linguistic forms. Wardhaugh (1976) notes that women tend to use some words and structures that men do not:

> Certain color words such as *mauve* and *lavender* . . . intensifiers like *He's such a dear*, and emotive adjectives like *adorable*, *lovely*, and *divine* are avoided by males.

While the teacher of English as a second language would not wish to promote linguistic sexism, language learners will need to be aware of verbal taboos that may cause them to be viewed negatively by natives.

The relative proficiency of the speakers in a conversation has also been found to affect linguistic choices. Native speakers, consciously or unconsciously, often change their language use to reflect the level of linguistic knowledge of their listeners. This simplification of linguistic output, known as "foreigner talk" (Hatch, Shapira, and Gough, 1976) can be useful to language learners in that it provides them with "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1980) and thus may help them to progress. Perhaps the conscious use of "foreigner talk" by the teacher could be effective in the ESL classroom. While the goal of the second language teacher must remain the presentation of a model that is real and natural, the choice of language with a level of complexity appropriate for the learners is crucial.

Notions and functions

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of the purpose or function of a communicative event in determining the choice of language (promising, commanding, apologizing, and requesting are all language functions). Particular structures and expressions are appropriate depending

on the function of an utterance in discourse (van Ek, 1976), and our choices are both systematic and informative (Larsen-Freeman, 1980).

At times, a single function may have many possible linguistic realizations. For example, Munby (1978) lists many alternative expressions for the function of suggesting:

> I suggest . . . , Why don't you try . . . , How about . . . , Let's . . . , You might like . . . , Well, . . .

Although such expressions are synonymous in a general sense, they are, of course, not consistently interchangeable.

Studies of adult second language acquisition show that English learners do not naturally acquire the ability to use language appropriately in terms of its function and context (Rintell, 1979; Scarcella, 1979). A knowledge of the rules needed to produce grammatically correct sentences in isolation is not sufficient to prepare a learner to use English in a communicative situation. It has therefore been suggested that the English syllabus be organized on a functional basis that will include the appropriate use of language in terms of what is being communicated (Wilkins, 1976, 1979). The traditional grammar-based syllabus is seen as inadequate since it often omits language functions that are crucial for language use.

Van Ek (1976), with the support of the Council of Europe, did fundamental work in creating and developing a notional-functional syllabus. He listed notions (concepts) and functions that are appropriate to a large variety of topics and situations. General or "common core" expressions are contrasted with those that are more specific to particular linguistic situations and topic areas. The following are some examples:

> General notions: Possibility-impossibility, location, distance, sequence, length of time, cause, effect.
> Specific notions: Early-late, far-near, sunshine, snow, rain, ice, soap, towel, toothbrush, toothpaste.
> Functions: Expressing whether one is or is not obliged to do something: I/we (don't) have to + VP.
> Seeking permission: May I + VP, Do you mind + *if* clause.
> Expressing preference: I prefer + noun or pronoun.
> Warning others to take care: Be careful! Look out! Don't + VP!

Van Ek also distinguishes between those notions and functions needed for receptive purposes and those that the learner needs to use productively.

It must be stressed that advocates of the notional-functional syllabus have not necessarily abandoned the teaching of grammar. Instead, the emphasis is on the development of "a framework which makes full use of the communicative potential of a functional-notional approach while at the same time enabling the learner to master and operate the grammatical system" (van Ek, 1976). (The notional-functional syllabus should also be distinguished from the situational syllabus [Wilkins, 1979], which is organized on the basis of particular situations a learner might encounter.)

How Registers Vary

All aspects of language are subject to changes in register. Variation on the lexical level is perceptually the most salient. Eating, for example, can be referred to as "dining," "munching," or "stuffing your face." Certain formulaic expressions also have differing distributions, such as "How do you do?" versus "Hello" and "Hi" (Bodman and Lanzano, 1981a).

Alterations in language on a phonological level occur with changes in formality. "What did you think?" in an informal context can sound like "Wajathink?" as the result of the application of a palatalization rule associated with fast speech. Aronowitz, Beebe, and Hill (1978) noted the problems that learners have in decoding fast speech in native speakers as well as the sometimes unnatural attempts of English learners to apply fast speech rules to their own production.

Register is also associated with variation in syntax. In an investigation of the use of present perfect and preterit in a regional version of spoken American English, Marshall (1979) found such contrasts as "Did you eat yet?" versus "Have you eaten yet?" which were influenced by the speech situation, the age and social class of the speaker, and the presence of specific adverbs (always, already, yet).

Discourse that focuses on the patterned use of sentences in combination (Widdowson, 1979) is affected by register. Rules for conversation differ depending on the setting, topic, and relative status of the speakers. Let us suppose you wish to disagree with something that is being said. First you must get a turn in the conversation. You could wait until the speaker pauses to take a breath, and you could say, "Hey, hold on a minute." Or, if the speaker is someone of higher status whom you do not wish to offend, you might wait until you are certain that she or he has finished talking. You could then tentatively suggest, "Well, do you think there might be another explanation?"

The way a participant in an exchange is addressed is also dependent on status, and a change in address (such as "Joe" versus "Mr. Williams") is expected to be initiated by the higher status participant (Levine, 1976).

There are also nonverbal behaviors associated with different registers. The spatial distance between speakers will change to reflect friendship or a business relationship, and other nonverbal signals such as how people may touch each other will vary with register. Greetings may range from a handshake to a warm embrace, depending upon context and participant relationships.

Combinations of linguistic forms from different registers can be used in a single communicative event for style or for humor (in a broad sense, a kind of code switching). This is illustrated by the following comment, made by an articulate dean at a prestigious university. In addressing the new faculty, she focused on their responsibilities as teachers, researchers, and representatives of the school. Her tone was serious, and her language formal. She ended her talk as follows:

> And so, let me conclude by stating that we have the utmost confidence in you. Now, give it your best shot!

Dialects

Up to this point, we have been discussing variation in language within a single speech community. But English learners routinely come into contact with speakers of different dialects of English.

According to McDavid (1969), a dialect is a variety of a language set off from other varieties by a unique complex of features of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Linguists share the view that dialect is a term that refers to different linguistic forms but is neutral with respect to the intrinsic value of a particular variety. Of course, dialects exist within societies that by consensus ascribe differing status to specific forms (Giles and Powesland, 1975). A standard dialect is one that has gained acceptance by a community of users as the prestige style of that language. While a nonstandard language variety is equal to the standard in purely linguistic terms, it has not gained the prestige accorded to the standard language in the culture at large.

Dialects may be regional and reflect the language spoken in a specific area of the country. New Yorkers and Bostonians, for example, are easily distinguished from their Midwestern and Southern compatriots on the basis of their speech. Social dialects are typical of particular speech communities whose language may differ from that of others due to the cohesiveness of an individual social or ethnic group. (For a thorough treatment of regional and social dialects, see Allen and Underwood, 1971.)

Since attitudes associated with language varieties are often unconscious, many individuals are unaware of how levels of prestige become associated with standard and nonstandard dialects. It is not uncommon for negative judgments to be ascribed to nonstandard dialect speakers by the society at large, and even those who themselves speak nonstandard dialects may share the negative views of the larger culture regarding themselves and the way they speak. These negative associations can affect the English learner both as a listener and a speaker. Eisenstein (1979) and Swacker (1977) have found that many English learners adopt the negative views of nonstandard dialects and speakers. At the same time, learners can be downgraded by native speakers when they attempt to adopt colloquial or nonstandard patterns in the target language (Swacker, 1976).

According to theory, the various dialects of a given language should be mutually intelligible to native speakers of the language. However, research with learners of English as a second language shows that they often have greater difficulty comprehending nonstandard forms of English than the standard form presented in class (Eisenstein, 1981; Eisenstein and Berkowitz, 1981; Roussel, 1972). Learners must understand the range of language forms spoken where they live in order to cope with daily life, and they are often dependent on nonstandard English speakers for directions and help. Nonstandard dialect speakers are likely to be found in department stores, driving buses, walking down the street, or living next door. It should be one of our goals as teachers to facilitate students' comprehension of the different English dialects spoken around them.

An aspect of the dialect problem not often considered is that some English learners are in the process of acquiring a nonstandard dialect of English due to considerable contact with nonstandard English speakers. Such learners often have difficulty with the standard language presented in school settings and in the business world. This is a widespread phenomenon that includes the influence of black English on the language of Spanish speakers in urban areas (Eisenstein and Jimenez, forthcoming; Johnson et al., 1976; Mooney, 1979, 1980; Wolfram, 1974), dormitory English spoken by Navajo English learners in

the Southwest (Harvey, 1973) and Hawaiian Creole English spoken by Korean immigrants in Honolulu (Klein, 1980).

We must also consider the extent to which English learners should be made aware of dialects spoken in other regions and countries. If students are learning English in the United States but plan to return to a country where British English or some local variety is widely used, we must try to meet their needs. The differences between British English and American English have been widely commented on (Leech and Svartvik, 1975). According to Strevens (1977), while differences in syntax do exist, the distinctions between educated British and American English are largely phonological. Bodman (personal communication) claims that the realization of particular functions differs significantly in British versus American English. Several texts on teaching English as a second language consider the differences between British and American varieties and the question of which to teach (Rivers and Temperley, 1978; Dubin and Olshtain, 1977).

Kachru (1976) examined the attitudes of linguists and educators toward third-world varieties of English that perform particular linguistic and social functions in areas where English is not the native language. Kachru's plea for a more objective linguistic view is relevant not only to English teachers abroad but to ESL teachers in this country who encounter learners who have been influenced by these third-world varieties of English. Other forms of non-native English that have received recent attention include the English varieties of West Africa (Spencer, 1971) and the English of the Philippines (Richards, 1979b).

Register and Dialect: Which Is Which?

A source of confusion for teachers and learners alike has been the relationship of dialect to formality of language. Within a single dialect, standard or nonstandard, there may be a range of linguistic forms and expressions from informal to formal, and certain language appropriate to particular contexts. It has often been observed that a bidialectal speaker may use an informal form of a nonstandard dialect in the home domain and a standard dialect in more formal settings within the society at large. But there are formal domains for nonstandard dialects and informal domains for standard ones. The register of black English that would be used in church, for example, would be more formal than that used in casual conversation (Smitherman, 1977).

The distinction between informal conversational language and slang is another potential area of confusion for the learner. The term "colloquial language" is a broad expression that includes the informal spoken language used in everyday life. A part of this colloquial language is considered slang, which while hard to define precisely (Fromkin and Rodman, 1978), may be regarded as very informal (Barnhart, 1968) and often limited in use to a particular social group within the society (Leech and Svartvik, 1975). Young people currently use such expressions as "Let's split," meaning it's time to leave, or "pig out," which refers to overeating. Slang may even represent a kind of secret code for its users, and, as such, characteristically endures for a limited time. Once a slang term becomes widely known in the speech community, it may gain acceptability or it may fall into disuse with remarkable speed.

English for Specific Purposes

Linguistic forms that are identified with subgroups within a speech community are not limited to slang. Many professionals use words and expressions that may not be familiar or even intelligible to other speakers within the larger society. The following comment was made by an attorney regarding a court case:

> In the case of Jones versus Smith, it was found that the burden of proof in establishing long-arm jurisdiction was on the plaintiff who had to make out a prima facie case (R. Friedman, Esq., personal communication).

Native speakers of English with an excellent vocabulary cannot interpret the above comment unless they are familiar with the specialized language of law. Such special language (a restricted register) is used by doctors, accountants, short order cooks, computer analysts, and even linguists!

When English learners wish to enter particular professions, they need to learn the associated linguistic forms. ESL teaching that focuses on the use of language in a particular domain has been called ESP (English for Specific Purposes). Special kinds of English are not limited to professions but may extend to categories of use or topics. For example, specialized expressions will be required for arranging a vacation, reading a do-it-yourself home repair manual, or buying a new car.

Summary

Register is a situationally distinctive use of language. It may be determined by topic, situation, participants, and communicative mode in a language event and is reflected in phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and discourse. Misunderstandings may result from an English learner's choice of an inappropriate register.

The purpose of language also affects its use, and one perspective for teaching it is to consider what forms are needed for specific functions. The notional-functional syllabus is a way of structuring ESL teaching to insure that learners are exposed to the necessary range of basic linguistic functions.

Dialects are varieties associated with individual language communities, and although dialect is a neutral linguistic term, society ascribes values to dialects, considering some standard and others nonstandard. Attitudes are associated not only with dialects as language forms but also with the speakers who use them. These linguistic distinctions pose problems for learners for whom unfamiliar dialects may create barriers to comprehension of the target language. Such comprehension difficulties may extend not only to regional and social dialects but also to the specialized forms used by subgroups of the society.

English teaching that stresses the communicative use of language will have to incorporate the kinds of language variation discussed above in order to help the learner truly achieve communicative competence. The next section provides some suggestions for communicative exercises that may be used in the ESL classroom.

II. THE CLASSROOM

Making Choices: The Presentation of Alternatives

The first step in planning an ESL curriculum that deals with language variation is to assess the needs of the learner population. Of course, the basic learner profile including age, sex, ability, and cultural background must be taken into account. The teacher must also consider how learners are likely to use English during and after the course of study. The following outline can serve as a point of departure.

For what purposes will English be used?

- To study in the United States (in elementary, high school, or college)?
- To function in everyday situations (at the market, getting directions, greeting acquaintances, at the post office . . .)?
- To use in a specific work-related environment (medicine, airlines, engineering, teaching, business, accounting . . .)?
- To conduct personal relationships (with friends, children, spouses . . .)?

Where is English being used during the period of study?

Where will English be used in the future?

- In a local area, in the United States as a whole, in some other region of the country?

- In a different native English-speaking country such as Britain or Australia?

- In a country in which there is a local non-native variety of English (India, the Philippines . . .)?

- In an area where the language of the speech community is a standard dialect of English, a nonstandard dialect of English, or in which a variety of dialects are spoken depending on the context?

Alternative approaches to identifying learners' needs are outlined by Mackay and Mountford (1978), who suggest either structured interviews or questionnaires for assessing students. Munby (1978) has developed a "communication needs processor" which renders a detailed profile of the language needs of a particular learner.

The learners' interests should also be considered. Bodman and Lanzano (1978) developed a questionnaire to survey the relative degree of ESL students' interest in many potential areas of English study, including occupation, housing, consumer affairs, and evaluation of advertising. While it may not be practical for all teachers to conduct large-scale surveys of learner populations, and particular classes may prove to be rather heterogeneous, teachers should consider students' interests in making decisions on lesson content.

The age of the learners is also an important factor. A learner population made up of young school-age children in the early grades will need the formal language that is appropriate for functioning in the school setting and conversing with adults and authority figures. They also require the informal language that will be acceptable for speaking with their peers. If the children are simultaneously attending classes with native English speakers, it may be desirable for the ESL curriculum to include content from those subject areas taught in English. In order to communicate, children need to know how to meet new people, how to play and use the language of games, how to take a conversational turn, disagree, ask a favor, etc. And the language for these functions is likely to differ for the same child who is talking with a friend, a teacher, or an unfamiliar adult.

An ESL curriculum would be different for a class of adults who want to function in the society at large but do not have any immediate plans for formal education in English. In this case, language priorities would relate to situations of everyday life such as shopping and visiting friends. The priorities for such a class would not be exactly the same as

those for a group of young adults who wish to enter college and who need to know a great deal about the use of formal language, particularly the differences between spoken and written forms.

The decision concerning how many registers or language styles to present is a complex one. Joos, in *The Five Clocks* (1967), recognizes five levels of formality: frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. Trudgill (1974) recognizes formal speech, reading style, word list style, and casual speech. But such discrete categories appear to be inconsistent and difficult to describe. The level of formality can best be described for an ESL class as a scale from very formal to very informal. This agrees with the view expressed in Giles and Powesland (1975):

> Situational determinants, singly or in combination, can provide contexts of interaction varying in degrees of formality-informality which may best be considered as points along a continuum.

A range of expressions from formal to informal is presented on a scale by Bodman and Lanzano (1981b:48) to help students control register differences as they are learning English. The following contrasts how feelings can be expressed on a scale from formal to informal:

FORMAL——————————|——————————INFORMAL

I was badly frightened when . . .	I was really afraid when . . .	It really shook me up when . . .

While not all expressions are necessarily delineated for their degree of formality, a focus on clear distinctions such as that provided by the scale above will help learners develop a sensitivity to potential register differences in English.

Classroom Activities

How can the ESL teacher enhance the ability of English learners to use registers and varieties of English appropriately and interpret correctly the language of native English speakers? Many approaches and ideas have been suggested. The following is intended as a small sample of some possible activities that reflect the many English forms students may encounter.

Dialogues

Dialogues have been used in foreign language teaching since the Middle Ages (Rivers and Temperley, 1978). They have the advantage of presenting a chunk of discourse for examination and exploitation by learners. Although there have been many examples of dialogues that represent language no one would ever use under any circumstances (Madsen and Bowen, 1978), a well-written dialogue can be of enormous help to learners.

The context of a dialogue can communicate as much about language use as the syntactic and lexical items it contains. The relationship of the participants and their purpose for communication are crucial to the accurate interpretation of what is said and how meaning is conveyed. In an article on the uses of "Excuse me" and "I'm sorry" in English, Borkin and Reinhart (1978) suggest some sample dialogues for teaching the use of these expressions to ESL students. The dialogues presented are extremely effective because a situation is described that is indicative of the meaning of the language in a social context.

Situation 1: Mike is having some friends over for dinner. They have just sat down to eat.

Karen: Mike, this soup is delicious. (telephone rings)

Mike: Excuse me, I'll be right back.

Situation 2: A man and a woman are sitting in a dentist's office. The woman takes out her cigarettes but can't find any matches.

Woman: Excuse me, do you have any matches?

Man: I think so. Just a minute, I'll look.

Borkin and Reinhart go on to explain that while "Excuse me" can be used with a good friend to remedy a breach of etiquette (as in dialogue 1 above), it is appropriately used to get someone's attention only in formal situations (dialogue 2). "In an informal situation involving friends, Hey, (name), or (Name) are appropriate ways of getting someone's attention."

Along with a clearly specified context, it is helpful to provide descriptions of the individuals speaking in a dialogue. These should be consistent with the language used and the relationships that such language implies. In this way learners will associate linguistic forms with specific contexts and extrapolate to analogous situations in real communicative events.

Dialogue game. A variation on the traditional dialogue has been suggested by Kimball and Palmer (1978) and developed by Palmer and Kimball (1980). In this case, a dialogue takes the form of a language game in which the first turn in the discourse is specified. For every subsequent turn, each speaker-player must choose the more appropriate of two alternative responses until the dialogue ends. The use of the dialogue game to teach sensitivity to variation in English is exemplified by the following (Kimball and Palmer, 1978, Game 6):

Player A	Player B
1. Could I please speak to Harry?	I'm sorry, but Harry's not here. I regret Harry's not being here.
2. Could you tell me when he'll be back? You should inform me, please, when he will return.	He'll be back at 10.

Kimball and Palmer point out that

> the teaching points of the game may be directed toward requiring the student to make choices based on the situation or the purpose of the transactions around which the game is built, or the acceptability or "English-ness" of the alternatives between which he must choose, or even on discrete points of grammar.

Dialogue rewriting. Alternative approaches to communicating can be generated by the learners themselves. Learners can rewrite dialogues to accommodate changes in situation, participant relationships, and purpose. A dialogue between two good friends could be rewritten so as to make it a talk between two acquaintances; the conversation between two people who are angry could be changed to reflect a more cordial tone.

Sample exercise.

In the dialogue below, you invite your good friend, Larry, over to dinner.

You: Larry, are you busy Friday night?
Larry: I'm not planning anything special, why?
You: Well, I'm having a few friends over for dinner at about seven. Can you make it?
Larry: Sure, that's great! I'll be there.

Rewrite this dialogue, imagining that you are inviting your boss to dinner.

(The rewritten version might look something like this:)

You: Excuse me, Mr. Spencer, may I speak with you for a moment?
Boss: Certainly, what can I do for you?
You: I'm planning a small dinner party this Friday evening, and I was hoping you could join us.
Boss: Why, thank you for asking. I'd enjoy that very much.
You: Fine. We'll expect you about seven, then?
Boss: That's fine. I'll see you then.

Subsequent class discussion should include any necessary corrections and should underscore the differences between the original and the rewritten dialogue. In this case, the change in status from peers to employer-employee results in differences including (1) a more formal request for attention ("Larry?" versus "Excuse me, Mr. Spencer") and (2) the hesitancy of the employee to pin the employer down in advance of the invitation as to whether he was free on the evening in question.

Of course, rewriting exercises like the one above presume that learners have already been presented with a model for the distinction being manipulated. Another possibility would be to have the class construct a dialogue as a group with teacher input as needed. An additional variation that lends itself to small-group work is to have various groups in the class change a dialogue to convey a different emotional tone, social level, or degree of formality.

Role playing. Situations can be set up where learners take on particular identities in contexts in which specific functions must be performed. Appropriate expressions and nonverbal signals should be introduced in advance.

Sample exercise.

1. Your friend has given you a gift that you cannot use. It was purchased at a well-known department store, and you have decided to exchange it. [Have one person play the salesperson and another the customer.] In order to do this you must:

   (a) Get the attention of the salesperson
   (Verbal cues) Excuse me, could you help me?
   (Nonverbal cues) Wait until she or he looks in your direction before you state your problem.

   (b) Politely explain the problem by using such expressions as *I'm sorry, but* I was given this as a gift and I can't use it. *Would it be possible for me to* exchange it?

2. You are on your way to visit a friend and discover that you are lost. Stop a passing pedestrian and ask for directions. You have to ask two people. The first is also a stranger to the area and can't help you; the second gives the information needed. Remember to stand at the appropriate distance for conversation with an American you do not know. Make sure you get to the point quickly, e.g., "Excuse me, but I seem to be lost." If the person you stop can't help you, say, "Thanks, anyway." When you do get the help you need, repeat the instructions to make sure they are correct. "Now, let's see if I understand. First, I turn right at the corner, then I walk two blocks . . . ," etc. There will most likely not be any physical contact made during the exchanges above--not even a handshake.

3. You are in a restaurant and the waiter has just brought a steak that is practically raw. You ordered it well done. Attract his attention, and ask him to take it back. At first he tries to talk you out of it, but you politely insist. [One person plays the customer, another the waiter.]

Questions to consider are What cues would help the learner act out this situation? What nonverbal signals are appropriate for politely getting a waiter's attention? What can a customer say to firmly disagree with, yet not antagonize, a service person?

Gambits. A variety of classroom activities based on language functions are available in a set of books called *Gambits* (Keller and Warner, 1979a, 1979b, 1979c; Fox et al., 1980). The following exercise is adapted from Book 1, chapter 3, "Digression Openers," and teaches learners how to move off and how to return to the topic of conversation.[1]

Moving off the topic.

Speaking of . . . that reminds me . . . by the way . . . before I forget I just thought of something. . . .

Getting back to the topic.

Could we please get back to the topic? I'm getting a bit hungry and I'd like to finish.

Other openers: Let's get back to . . . going back to . . . returning to. . . .

For this exercise, the class is divided into groups of four to five students. Each group may talk about anything it chooses. After a little while, one person acts bored and interrupts, using one of the expressions presented, and suggests that the group get back to the agenda. But the group refuses to return to the topic, whereupon the bored person gets up and joins another group. A short time later, other students who are bored again suggest getting back to the topic, are refused, and leave for another group. The process is repeated.

Making a choice. In this activity, adapted from Bodman and Lanzano (1981b), the participants involved in a certain situation are specified, and learners choose the appropriate remarks from among several alternatives.

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[1]Editor's note: For an extensive discussion of conversational strategies, see Claire Kramsch, *Discourse Analysis and Second Language Teaching*, and Gail Guntermann and June Phillips, *Functional-Notional Concepts: Adapting the FL Textbook*, Nos. 37 and 44 in the Language in Education series.

Sample exercise.

1. Sophie Karkosza saw Maria Calvo in class on Tuesday night. It's now Thursday night. When she sees Maria again, which of the following should Sophie say?

   (a) How do you do, Maria? It's nice to see you.
   (b) Hello, Maria. How are you?

2. Mr. Kim goes to a party. His friend introduces him to the ambassador from the Dominican Republic. When he meets the ambassador, which of these should he say?

   (a) It's a pleasure to meet you.
   (b) It's great to see you.

A new identity. While most role play in class tends to be restricted to a classroom exercise like the one above, an alternative type of role play is to assign a different identity to learners for a particular period of time. In this approach, which is based on suggestopedic methodology, each student chooses a new name, address, and profession that he or she assumes for an entire semester. These new identities help free students to participate fully in the process of instruction. The underlying theory (Saferis, 1976) is that if in order to learn a language successfully students must be prepared to make mistakes and sometimes feel foolish in front of others, another identity could relieve their anxieties and make them feel less self-conscious.

The ESL teacher can allow learners to choose new identities, or roles can be assigned for as long as they are felt to be productive. For example, an overly informal speaker could be assigned the role of a supreme court judge, or a shy student told she is the class loudmouth.

What comes next? Even a simple completion exercise could be adapted for practice with linguistic variation. Many learners need practice in informal conversation. Rivers and Temperley (1978) suggest that the student provide an utterance to go along with a given expletive.

Hey, what d'you know! (*They've painted their house blue.*)
Excuse me, (*could you tell me where the post office is?*)

Look here, (*what do you mean by that!*)
Watch out, (*that window is broken!*)

Students could also be asked to respond with a rejoinder to stimuli provided by the teacher.

I'm afraid to go home. I lost all my money at the race track.
Rejoinder: (*Tough luck!*) or (*Too bad!*)

I just won a trip to the Bahamas.
Rejoinder: (*Wow!*) or (*No kidding!*)

This sort of exercise provides practice that could be further enhanced by assigning specific identities to each student involved. The potential audience for the utterance could also be suggested.

What's my ESP? Rivers and Temperley (1978) note exercises that focus on different categories of language use. They list 14 categories, including establishing social relations, expressing reactions, seeking information, and talking one's way out of trouble.

In the area of problem solving, they suggest such games as "What's my line?" This gives learners a chance to explore some of the language related to particular occupations. A possible adaptation of this would be to have the "contestants" give as hints examples of things they might say in the course of doing their jobs.

Open wide please, this won't hurt a bit.

Your honor, I object! I move the comment be stricken from the record.

What would you say? The teacher describes a situation, then asks, "What would you say?" (Johnson and Morrow, in Brumfit and Johnson, 1979).

Sample exercise.

Lynne has lost her purse. She looks everywhere but can't find it, so she goes to ask the school secretary, Mrs. West, for help. [The following cues may be provided:]

1. She goes into Mrs. West's office. She is disturbing Mrs. West, but Mrs. West doesn't mind.

2. Lynne says she needs help. Mrs. West asks what she can do.

3. She explains the problem and Mrs. West agrees to help.

When can I use it? The teacher lists expressions that vary in terms of registers represented and has small groups of students think of situations that would incorporate them. It might be a good idea to do the first few with the class as a whole so that the students become aware of the relevant variables involved. Here are some examples that illustrate the range of possibilities:

> What a mess! How fascinating! Would you be kind enough to share your impressions with me? How about that! Let's hit the road. It was a pleasure to have met you. How kind of you to ask. That's a lot of baloney! Try to keep a cool head. Don't lose your cool. Maintain your composure at all times.

Don't limit the class to teacher-generated suggestions. Students may enjoy volunteering their own sayings and judging whether others have used them appropriatively.

What you don't say. In every culture there are certain things that people do not say, even though they might think them. Learners need to develop sensitivity in this area since taboos vary from culture to culture. Under ordinary circumstances, for instance, Americans would not usually say things like "You look fat," or "How much money do you have in the bank?" or "I don't like your new dress at all."

Point out those topics or questions that are generally avoided by Americans, or describe the circumstances under which discussion of those topics might be appropriate. Suggest alternatives that might save a learner from answering a question impolitely. For example:

> How do you like my new dress?
> Oh, it's a nice color.

In addition, have learners point out things that Americans might say that would not be acceptable in their native languages. For example, upon viewing a new baby, English speakers usually praise the physical appearance and alertness of the child, perhaps suggesting it resembles one or both of its parents. But in some cultures, drawing this sort of attention to a new baby is thought to be in bad taste--it might even bring bad luck to the family!

Fast speech. To aid learners with fast speech rules that are often not represented orthographically, it can be helpful to present pronunciation cues as alternatives along with informal dialogues. The following is adapted from *Lifelines* (Foley and Pomann, 1981):

Michael: I like this tie. How much is it?
Salesperson: Six dollars.
Michael: I'll take it.
Sarah: I like these shoes. How much are they?
Salesperson: Twenty-eight dollars.
Sarah: I'll take them.

Pronunciation hints: I'll take it. (takeit) I'll take them. (takem)

Additional "hints" listed in *Lifelines*:

Have a	Has a	Where do you	Put them
(Hava)	(Haza)	(Wheredaya)	(Putem)

Additional examples you might want to make your students aware of:

How do you	Tell him	Tell her	Could have	Might have
(Howdaya)	(Tellim)	(Teller)	(Couldav)	(Mightav)
Could you	Did you	Have you	Could have	Might have
(Couldja)	(Didja)	(Havya)	(Couldav)	(Mightav)[1]

[1]See Weinstein (1982) for a wide range of exercises on fast speech.

Listening for sociolinguistic clues. Snow and Perkins (1979) suggest listening comprehension exercises that include sociolinguistic variation. They prepared classroom materials in which a formal interview with an authority on a particular topic was contrasted with an informal conversation on the same topic. Before hearing each tape, students were presented with summaries of the material to be discussed. In addition to content-based questions and activities, Snow and Perkins included such questions as

> Do the speakers know each other?
> What is their relationship? (friends, colleagues, business associates)
> How old are the two speakers?
> How do you know?

Writing with a context. In order to help learners acquire better control of variation in written language, Sandra McKay (1979) advocates providing a variety of writing voices, writing tasks, and audiences who represent the potential readers. Possible writer voices could include those of an engineer, businessman, government employee, student, etc. A sample task could be to "write a recommendation to your supervisor on a specific matter." (Associated language would include such expressions as "I would suggest, let me advise you. . . .") Of course, students would need adequate preparation in order to write in different voices, for different purposes, and with a variety of audiences in mind.

Sample exercise.

> You are a traffic officer. As part of your job you have to file a report of the accidents you cover while on duty. Yesterday you were at the scene of an automobile accident. You now need to file a report. The following information is what you scratched down on your notepad. Use this to write your report.
>
> > Time: 7:20 AM, April 14. Place: Highway 652. An overturned Volkswagen on the shoulder of the southbound lane.

As another exercise, McKay suggests that the student write in the voice of a consumer advocate. The assignment is to write a report comparing the prices in a privately owned store and the same items in a chain store. In this case, the student must first gather the data and then write a report following an outline provided by the teacher.

Register rewriting. The differences between oral and written language need to be mastered by many ESL learners, and focused practice to this end is helpful. The teacher can have students rewrite a piece of formal written prose to resemble oral language (one individual talking to another, face to face), imparting the same information. The teacher could supply equivalent expressions such as "however" vs. "but," "therefore" vs. "so," and "as well" vs. "too." An interesting newspaper article could provide good stimulus material for such a project, as we often read something in the news and later relate it to our friends. Similarly, students might practice with items taped from radio or television news programs in which the language, though oral, is more formal than that used in ordinary conversation.

Sorry, wrong register. There are times when individuals use the wrong register with either humorous or unfortunate consequences. The teacher can bring into class tapes or stories in which inappropriate language use results in unforeseen consequences for the participants. The class can analyze the problems and discuss how they might have been avoided.

Sample exercise.

A bilingual secretary had to cancel a lunch date with a friend. She phoned and said, "Susan, I regret that I shall be unable to keep our appointment for lunch this afternoon. However, I'd be happy to meet with you at a mutually convenient time."

Susan replied, "O.K., some other time . . ." and ended the conversation quickly. But she decided that her friend obviously didn't really care about their relationship because she had been so cold and distant on the phone. Why was Susan angry? What could her friend have said instead?

Sometimes registers do not translate well from one language and culture to another. Many non-native speakers report that Americans strike them as overly familiar or impolite. In Japan, for example, teachers are addressed with the utmost respect, whereas in the United States, some teachers may purposely cultivate an informal class atmosphere. While this informality does not indicate any lack of respect, it often makes ESL students uncomfortable, as evidenced by the case of the Oriental student who insisted on calling his female instructor "Sir"!

Here, again, it can be helpful to have students offer samples of American speech that seem to them overly formal or informal, polite or impolite. These examples could stimulate discussion of how particular functions are expressed in native and target cultures. It will help students to say the right thing, while reducing the likelihood of their being offended when they encounter cross-linguistic differences in register.

Guess who, where, what? The presentation of language events in which learners must guess about probable topics, situations, and participant relationships could provide a useful challenge for learners. Questions would include who is speaking to whom, where, and for what purpose. To provide a good contrast for this exercise, the teacher can bring in two letters; one is for a friend and another is addressed to a business person. Students are to guess which letter is intended for whom and to indicate how they are able to tell.

Letter A

Dear Mr. Johnson:

I was pleased to learn of your recent promotion to office manager. The new title was certainly well deserved, based on your fine work in the past.

I look forward to a continued rewarding association with you.

Very truly yours,

Letter B

Dear Hank,

It was great to hear about your promotion to office manager. I know how hard you worked to get it, and considering the good job you've been doing, you really deserved it.

I can't wait to get together so you can give me all the details.

All the best,

(If the salutations and closings make the exercise too easy, just leave them out.)

Real language activities

Most of the classroom activities discussed so far deal with simulations of one kind or another. Some second language teachers and researchers (Holmes, 1978; Taylor, 1981) feel that no matter how useful role plays and simulations may be, they can never be completely satisfactory as a means of teaching the communicative uses of language. The approach advocated by Holmes is to actually change the participant relationships and the kinds of tasks set in the classroom in order to increase the opportunities of the learners for developing sociolinguistic skills. Dyads and small group interactions, for example, provide a context for a more "colloquial" variety of language than would normally be used in a teacher-directed, formal, full-class interaction. This is partially due to the fact that pupil-teacher language reflects the social distance between teacher and pupil. (Of course, for many English learners, the pupil-teacher relationship in the United States is uncomfortably informal and familiar.) Small-group interaction has the additional attraction of providing a much wider range of speech functions than is likely to occur in discourse in which the entire class participates. Finally, Holmes recommends the use of native speakers as tutors--an excellent idea if it can be arranged.

Communication problem. In the following activity (adapted from Allwright, 1979), learners must use real language in order to solve a problem.

Two players are seated at a table with a screen between them. In front of each player is a set of five small objects; the players have identical sets. A third student makes a pattern with the objects in front of one of the players, who must then try to give verbal instructions to the other player to enable him to put his set of objects into the same pattern. A time limit may be set (30 seconds is suggested), and the third student may be the timekeeper.

Getting to know each other. Moskowitz (1978) suggests a wealth of group activities for providing ESL students with the opportunity to share real-life experiences with others. These group experiences create a format for the use of informal and real language suitable for interaction with one's peers.

The following exercise, suggested by Moskowitz, focuses on birth order and its effect on personality and feeling. Students list themselves and their siblings in order of age. The class is then organized into several small groups that share sibling relationships or that comprise "only" children. Students are told: "You have been grouped according to your birth-order in your family. Try to find out what things you have in common with the others in your group. Talk about things like your feelings, experiences, attitudes, values, and personalities. Write down the similarities your group discovers and then report them to the whole class.

Outside tasks. Learners could also be encouraged to use language outside of the classroom with appropriate preparation in advance. Such activities could include ordering in restaurants, requesting information in department stores, telephoning directory assistance, or asking a stranger for directions.

Putting it in writing. Many of us have had the occasion to remark that we wish something could be changed or done differently. It is sometimes effective and, at the very least, personally satisfying to put our suggestions for change in the form of a written proposal.

As part of a classroom exercise, English learners could propose real improvements they would like to see made. The teacher offers a model proposal and generates some additional ones for practice. Then each student writes one that is meaningful to him or her. After corrections are made, these suggestions could be sent to the appropriate parties.

This kind of practice is useful for learning formal written expressions. Keller and Warner (1979b) suggest presenting relevant expressions (which they call "subject expansion links") to aid in this process:

Suggestion: I would like to suggest that. . . .
Results: Therefore, consequently, so, as a result, thus
Reasons: For this reason, in view of (the fact), because of

A possible sample might go something like this:

> I would like to suggest that the procedure for registration take into account the special problems of foreign students. Because we are required to take English classes for two hours each day, the number of courses available to us is limited, and, as new students, we are the last to register. Consequently, we are often closed out of the courses we need. In view of this, I feel that foreign students should be allowed to register earlier so that they have a better chance to plan suitable programs.

Learning from the media. Access to real language samples is also available through the medium of television. Soap operas are an excellent source of standard but informal language use in contexts where topic and participant relationships are easily identifiable. Educational programs are a good source of language for special purposes. Television programs provide information about a wide range of areas including cooking, home repair, medical research, health care, and fashion. Language-oriented tasks associated with viewing a particular program could easily be assigned. For example, students could be told:

"Watch an interview program. List the different kinds of questions used by the host in encouraging guests to talk. What do the guests say when they do not want to answer a question?"

"Watch a soap opera [a specific one should be assigned]. What do characters say to show the following feelings: surprise, shock, anger, happiness? [For soap operas, be sure to fill the class in on the plot in advance.]

If the necessary equipment is available, television programs may be videotaped for later playback and analysis in class. This will allow elements of both verbal and nonverbal communication to be captured and studied.

Exploiting advertising. Students can be encouraged to gather advertising slogans from television, radio, newspapers, magazines, or billboards. These samples are likely to illustrate a wide spectrum of language use and may include idiomatic expressions or slang. Consider the linguistic range represented by some of the following contemporary advertisements:

Ain't no reason to go anywhere else.
She conked out, but her hair held up.
You've come a long way, baby.
Reach out and touch someone.
As a host, I appreciate the superior quality of ____;
as an economist, I applaud its superior value.

Dialects

Given the varieties of English language that exist across social and geographical boundaries, it is likely that learners will need not only to function in different registers of a single dialect but to understand speakers of more than one English dialect. Should learners be taught to produce as well as comprehend different dialects of English? And what should be done about learners who are already in the process of using nonstandard English? The answers to these questions are interrelated.

In view of the findings of Swacker (1976) and Aronowitz et al. (1978), English learners may encounter either overt or covert negative reactions from native English speakers when they--the learners--try to emulate nonstandard forms. At the same time, English learners report difficulty in understanding nonstandard speakers. It would therefore appear reasonable to teach English learners to produce the standard while developing receptive competence in those nonstandard varieties to which they will be exposed. If students intend to return to an area in which either a different standard or a non-native variety of English is the norm, this form should be accepted along with the standard of the region in which the class takes place.

The appropriate time to begin work with different dialects is dependent both on developmental factors and on particular population variables. Greenbaum (1975) argues against the early introduction of variants because he feels they may confuse or complicate foreign language acquisition. But Marshall (1981), to the contrary, indicates that "to ignore variation is infinitely more confusing." An understanding of variation will help to make real-world input comprehensible for the learner.

Eisenstein (1979) found that even in early stages, learners have a sense of a "norm" as a target for developing English proficiency. Intermediate and advanced learners continue to develop the ability to distinguish among dialects that may become associated with specific linguistic categories and attitudes toward speakers. On this basis, the intermediate level appears appropriate for introducing the concept of dialects in the ESL class.

However, if learners are in frequent contact with other dialect speakers, both standard and nonstandard forms should be dealt with immediately, with the focus on the standard as it is used in appropriate contexts. Learners can be given feedback to help them become aware of the existence of systematic differences between dialects and occasions for their use. A bidialectal approach may be called for in certain situations. This means the learner will be presented with the differing aspects of the dialects in question along with their distribution in the society. It is crucial that learners who are acquiring nonstandard English forms not be penalized for doing so within the ESL class. Rather, nonstandard forms should be accepted as appropriate under certain conditions, and the standard language should be taught as appropriate in other contexts.

Most of the classroom activities suggested so far have dealt with variations in register. The need for such practice has been widely recognized, and some of the classroom suggestions are not unfamiliar. The question of dialect, however, is more complex and sensitive.

Developing dialect sensitivity

A technique for introducing dialect differences in ESL classes was developed by Eisenstein (1980) and tested by Eisenstein, Kaltinick, and Shaw (1980). The purpose of this technique is twofold: to focus on differences among dialects and to put learners in touch with their own developing attitudes toward various dialects and their speakers.

The approach involves an application of the matched guise technique originally developed by Lambert et al. (1960) as a research tool. In this case, a bidialectal speaker records the same passage in both standard and nonstandard English. After hearing each tape, learners are asked to judge each speaker on a variety of characteristics based on their "impressions" from the language sample. Although learners typically assume that there are two speakers, only one is actually involved, so differences in judgments are due to the language variety used. After class judgments are tabulated, the truth about the tapes is revealed, and a guided discussion follows including such questions as

> Have you ever heard anyone speak like the people on the tapes? Tell about your experience.
> Are there different ways of speaking your language?
> How would you like to speak English? Why?

In the course of the discussion, an explanation of the differences between standard and nonstandard dialects is included along with a critical view of attitudes associated with them. The appropriateness of each variety of language is also considered.

Although this experience, something akin to a consciousness-raising activity for dialect sensitivity, takes place in the classroom, the resulting insights may help learners cope with dialect differences when they are encountered in natural contexts. Additional follow-up exercises should also be done in class. Emphasis should be on comprehension of the dialects presented.

Samples from the community. It has already been established that in an ESL environment, learners will be exposed to language variation outside of the classroom. Freed (1978) suggests having the learners gather second language speech samples from people in their communities. This will give learners guided experience in conversing with native speakers, and the resulting recordings will provide a rich source of language data for classroom analysis. Freed suggests giving students interview schedules consisting of questions designed to elicit both general information and personal experiences. General information questions are ordered first and are intended to elicit formal style, while queries relating to personal experiences are more closely associated with spontaneous and casual style. In one interview schedule, questions ranged from "How many people are there in your family?" to "Did you ever get blamed for something you didn't do? What happened?" Freed explains her approach as follows:

> Through a systematic progression of activities, students are encouraged and even obliged to engage in authentic communicative activities within the speech community, where both appropriate use and grammatical correctness are called for.

Freed reports that the taped interviews gathered by ESL students provided examples of dialects, slang, colloquial language, and typical cultural references often used in conversations by native speakers of English.

Dialect shift. A dialect shift exercise will focus on dialect contrasts and intelligibility problems. The teacher can introduce the lesson by playing a short recording of a nonstandard speaker. He or she first determines whether the sample can be understood by the students and then has them restate the same information as a standard English speaker might have said it. With children, imaginary characters could be the concrete representations of different dialect categories (e.g., Cool Cal versus Standard Sam).

Validation counseling. When English learners have already begun to acquire a nonstandard dialect of English, we must be particularly sensitive and accepting. Borodkin (1978) suggests the use of validation counseling, an approach designed to help learners feel more positive about the English they have acquired, while making them aware of the standard language as an alternative in appropriate contexts. She begins by presenting a sample of a nonstandard dialect that has a special flavor not easily conveyed in translation. The following quote from Martin Luther King is a striking example:

> Lawd, we ain't what we wanna be; we ain't what we oughta be, we sho' nuf ain't what we lak to be; but thank the Lawd, we ain't what we was.

Borodkin also recommends the presentation of alternative styles and a discussion of appropriateness for each. Later, a counseling session takes place in which students evaluate their own language choices and are encouraged to develop positive feelings about their individual language use, as well as the additional varieties they are learning.

Dialect records. Commercial recordings of various American dialects are available. "Americans Speaking" is a recording prepared by the National Council of Teachers of English

(McDavid and Muri, 1967). The purpose of this record is to provide teachers and students with large-scale samples of some of the major varieties of American English as naturally used by educated speakers. Six examples of regional standard dialects are presented, and notes accompanying the record indicate that many acceptable models exist for good American pronunciation. The selection for each speaker includes a set text read aloud and a sample of free discourse.

In the area of nonstandard dialects, a record developed by Western Electric (1970) entitled "The Dialect of the Black American" provides samples of both black English and standard English together with a broad view of the functions of standard and nonstandard dialects in a social context. The record was originally intended for use in a business environment, but it is available to schools and can be used to advantage in the ESL classroom.[1]

Music. Music is also a good source of different dialect samples. American folk songs are particularly appropriate since they reflect the spoken and informal language used in many parts of the country by the variety of people who speak English in the United States. The following excerpts from *The Weavers Song Book* (DeCormier, 1960) indicate the varieties of English found in American folk music:

Oh sinner man, where you gonna run to . . .
all on that day.

I been havin' some hard travelin'
I thought you knowed. . . .

Done laid around, done stayed around
this ol' town too long . . . and I feel like
I want to travel on.

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[1]For an annotated bibliography of audiovisual materials for teaching language variation, see R. Tripp and S. Behrens, *Audiovisual Materials for the Teaching of Language Variation* (Arlington, VA: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1976), ED 166 495.

Literature. A traditional source of language samples for English learners has been popular and classical literature. The careful choice of prose that is written to represent the use of particular dialects will enhance the understanding of dialect differences by learners. The following quote from *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou, deals with a universal concern.

> Ritie, don't worry 'cause you ain't pretty. Plenty pretty women I seen digging ditches or worse. You smart.

Plays, since they represent the oral form of language, can be an especially rich source of materials to illustrate variation. The following excerpt from Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* is representative of working-class New York City speech.

> Eddie: Him? You'll never see him no more, a guy do a thing like that? How's he gonna show his face? Just remember, kid, you can quicker get a million dollars that was stole than a word that you gave away.
> Catherine: Okay, I won't say a word to nobody, I swear.

Language variation extends not only to how one speaks but to what one says in a particular situation. Stories describing cultural contact can sometimes illustrate this point. Consider an interview from *Anna and the King of Siam* (Landon, 1943). In a meeting with Anna shortly after her arrival in Siam, the Kralahome, or premier, inquires about her background. His questions include the following:

> You are not married?
> Where will you go in the evening?
> How many years your husband has been dead?

Anna replies, "Tell your master that his rights do not extend to prying into my domestic concerns."

The author's interpretation elucidates the problem for the reader:

> Her instinctive reaction had blinded her momentarily to the knowledge that Orientals usually open a conversation with a series of personal questions, and that the Kralahome's seeming impertinence may have implied nothing more than a conventional desire to be polite.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that language varies within and across dialects. It changes with the nature of a particular situation, with the relationship of speaker to listener or writer to reader, and with the topic under discussion. Variation does not merely affect linguistic form; it contributes to meaning. Since this aspect of language is subtle, it is not often acquired automatically. In order for learners to achieve communicative competence in English, they need an awareness of the registers and dialects they will encounter.

By placing language in concrete situations where the relevant variables are specified, many of the classroom activities suggested here provide learners with information about the ways English can and does vary. ESL texts have now begun to stress language use in communicative situations, e.g., *In Touch* (Castle and Kimbrough, 1979), *Milk and Honey* (Bodman and Lanzano, 1981), *Strategies* (Abbs and Freebairn, 1977). Let us hope that the future will bring an expansion of materials in which register and dialect variation are presented in realistic and meaningful contexts.

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